

What Is Claimed Is:

H/ ~~Ex~~ 1. A hidden storage system for a vehicle having side panels and which does not substantially alter the external appearance of the vehicle, comprising:

5 at least one storage box having an interior mounted on at least one side of said vehicle;

at least one section of a side panel on at least said one side of said vehicle being hinged, whereby same can be opened to expose the interior of said storage box and closed to cover the interior of said storage box;

A 10 at least one ~~hidden~~ latch mechanism mounted to releasably secure said at least one hinged section of said fender/side panel; and lock means for actuating said at least one latch mechanism.

B 2. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein said vehicle~~ includes wheel wells, and wherein said at least one storage box ~~covers~~ ^{extends over} at least one of said wheel wells and extends forward and rearward therefrom.

B 3. The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein said at least one storage box is constructed to extend along at least a section of ~~the~~ ^a floor of said vehicle.

J 4. The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein said ~~latch~~ mechanism is hidden and includes a plurality of cooperating latch members adapted to be mounted on said storage box and said hinged section of said ^{at least one} side panel.
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5. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein said lock means~~
of activated means
is selected from the group consisting of mechanically activated means and
electrically activated means.

6. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein said at least~~
one storage box is provided with at least one shelf in the interior
thereof.

7. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein each side of~~
said vehicle is provided with at least one storage box *having an interior,*
one said side at least one hinged side panel section, and at least one *latch* latch mechanism.

8. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 7, wherein the latch~~
mechanism on each side of said vehicle has a separate lock means.

9. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 1, wherein said lock means~~
is positioned at an end of said at least one storage box.

10. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 1, additionally including~~
at least one strut assembly operatively connected to retain said at least
one hinged section of said *one* side panel in *an OPENED* ~~a raised~~ position.

11. ~~The hidden storage system of Claim 10, wherein said at least~~
one strut assembly is provided with means selected from the group
consisting of insulating means, heating means, and heating and insulating
means.

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~~13. The hidden storage system of Claim 12, wherein said side panel includes at least two sections hinged to enable raising each, lowering each, or raising one and lowering the other.~~

[illegible]

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16. The hidden storage system of Claim 15, wherein said hinged side panel section is hinged to open upwardly or downwardly.

Insert A5 >

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